

**REGINA PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD
CENTRAL LIBRARY RENEWAL
SEPTEMBER 27 2022
FLORENCE STRATTON**

Please do not demolish Central Library and replace it with a new central library, but rather fix what needs to be fixed in the current building. Opened in 1962, Central Library is only 60 years old. That's young for a building. The Legislative Building opened in 1912, making it more than 100 years old. Does the Library Board think it too should be demolished?

Why do I not want Central Library demolished and replaced by a new building? Here are my reasons.

First, the current building has heritage value. Designed by award winning local architect Kyoshi Izumi, it is widely recognized as a fine example of modernist architecture.

Second—and this is a crucial question—what is going to happen to library services during the period following the demolition of the current building and the construction and opening of a new Central Library building?

Surely library services will not be suspended during this period, which may be quite lengthy! After all, it may take quite some time for the City of Regina to come up with the \$124 million the Library Board estimates a new building will cost. The City does not even have the money to get the lead out of Regina water in a timely fashion—5 years rather than 15—lead that, in the meantime, is impacting the IQ of Regina children. How will it come up with \$124 million for a new Central Library!

This is what I fear: When the current building is demolished, Central Library will be moved into a “temporary” location, such as the Cornwall Centre. As the years go by, this “temporary” location will become permanent and the much-desired piece of property on which Central Library now stands will be made available to a property developer to build another office tower.

This may seem like a far-fetched notion, but it was the actual plan of the Library Board in 2012. What saved Central Library on that occasion was that the developer also wanted the Mason's property next door and the Masons refused to demolish their building and sell the property.

Or perhaps the corner of Lorne Street and 12th Avenue will become yet another downtown parking lot!

Central Library is currently located exactly where it needs to be located to best serve Library patrons: in the centre of downtown Regina, within one or two blocks of major Regina Transit

routes, and directly across from Victoria Park. Demolition of the current building risks relocation.

Third, I am also very concerned about losing services. Central Library, in addition to providing the traditional library service of “diffusing knowledge and information” through books and newspapers and journals and now the internet, also houses the Film Theatre, the Dunlop Art Gallery, and the Prairie History Room. These are invaluable services—and exceedingly valuable sources of knowledge and information. Ominously, the “renewal” documents say nothing about them.

In 2003, the Library Board proposed closing the Dunlop Gallery and the Prairie History Room, along with three branch libraries. But there was such an outcry from the public, it backed away.

If Central Library is replaced and a new central library developed, will it include the Dunlop Gallery, the Film Theatre, and Prairie History Room? I want concrete assurance!

I wish now to comment on a few of the claims made in RPL Board documents.

First, in attempting to make a case for replacing Central Library, the Board claims the building is “Not Accessible.” Central Library has a wheelchair accessible ramp up to the main door. Inside the building, it has an elevator going to all the floors. What is not accessible about it?

A friend of mine who uses a wheelchair tells me she finds Central Library one of the most accessible public buildings in the city.

Second, Board documents list a number of problems with the current building: “Windows not insulated,” “Roof...not reinforced,” “Aging electrical system” and so on.

If the windows need fixing, then fix them. If the roof needs reinforcing, then reinforce or replace it. If new electrical or heating systems are required, then please get them. Such renovations would cost much less than a new build.

Third, one of the documents quotes Regina’s *Energy and Sustainability Framework*: “Ensuring that new buildings are not sources of carbon emissions is key to reaching an ambitious emissions reduction targets.” Demolishing Central Library and putting up a new structure would create substantial carbon emissions, as well as adding substantial material to the Regina landfill. It would be much more economical in terms of both money and CO₂ emissions to retrofit the current building.

Fourth, Board documents imply that Central Library, “built to serve a population of 110,000” needs more space. If more space is, indeed, required, then why not add on to the current building? A study of a few years ago showed that the foundations of the building are strong

enough for two floors to be added to the current structure. Moreover, there is plenty of room on the west side of the building for an extension.

Fifth and finally, Board documents claim that the RPL Board of Directors “Consulted with the public.” The most recent in person public consultation was held in February 2020, just before Covid. About 100 people crowded into the second floor of the Library to hear what the consultants the RPL had hired, no doubt at some expense, had to say about “Central Library Renewal.” All but one of those hundred people said very clearly and very loudly: Keep the current building and location and services.

I am not alone in saying the same thing today. Keep the current building and location and services. Fix what needs to be fixed in the current building.